



News Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE – Sep. 14, 2005
05-232

Natural-gas pipeline project receives key environmental approval

OLYMPIA – The state Department of Ecology (Ecology) has issued a key approval – with conditions to protect water quality in streams and wetlands – for Northwest Pipeline Corp.'s proposal to replace 80 miles of natural gas pipeline.

The project would install four new sections of 36-inch diameter pipeline along a 268-mile, 26-inch line that runs from Sumas in Whatcom County to Washougal in Clark County. Construction of the new pipeline sections would improve public safety and replace the capacity that has been carried by the 26-inch line that opened in 1956. A parallel line that was added later will remain in operation.

The project is under a federal order to turn off the 26-inch line and turn on the new 36-inch pipeline sections by December 2006.

The company proposes to install the four new pipeline loops in parts of Whatcom, Skagit, Snohomish, King, Pierce and Thurston counties. Northwest Pipeline would abandon existing pipeline in place, except for 14.6 miles, where it will be removed and replaced with the larger pipe.

In addition, the company plans to upgrade five compressor stations in Whatcom, Skagit, Snohomish, Lewis, and Clark counties.

The project would cross 146 streams and 264 wetlands. Ecology – with input from the state Department of Fish and Wildlife and counties – has set conditions to protect water quality and avoid or minimize damage to wetlands and other water bodies. Ecology's approval requires restoration of all wetlands, stream banks and streambeds disturbed during construction. Northwest Pipeline also must construct or sponsor at least four major wetland mitigation projects off-site to compensate for damage that cannot be avoided.

Ecology's approval is the state's portion of the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission process to allow Northwest Pipeline to begin construction. It addresses state and local concerns over protection of water quality and other natural resources.

Northwest Pipeline is a subsidiary of Williams Pipeline Company.

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For more information:

Water quality approval:

http://www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/sea/fed-permit/NWRO_Decisions.html

Environmental impact statement:

http://www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/sea/nw_capacity_replacement/index.html

General background on the project from the Washington Utilities and Transportation Commission: www.utc.wa.gov. Click on Pipeline Safety and view the Williams items under Pipeline News & Activities.

Map of project locations:

http://www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/sea/nw_capacity_replacement/3x3_overview_exhibit.jpg

Broadcast version:

A project that would replace 80 miles of a regional natural-gas pipeline has won a key environmental approval from the Department of Ecology.

The Northwest Pipeline Company plans to replace sections of its aging inch pipe with new 36-inch line. The four sections slated for the upgrade are in parts of Whatcom, Skagit, Snohomish, King, Pierce and Thurston counties.

Ecology's approval sets environmental conditions the company must follow to protect hundreds of streams and wetlands that the pipeline will cross.